

# Analyzing Affinities

## Research on Personal and Instinctive Movement

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### Background Information

In the Fall 2019 semester, I began a year-long research project on movement affinities, which describe the way that an individual personally and instinctively moves, particularly in regard to improvisational dance. The first half of the project was focused on researching myself and my own affinities. My research was presented in the form of a solo choreographed and performed by myself, as well as four significant theories about what influences a person's own way of moving. The project continued in the following semester, where I applied my research methods to a group of dancers with histories different from myself and from one another, in an effort to affirm or deny my aforementioned theories.



### Research Methods

#### Personal Research:

- Past videos of myself improvising, and related journal entries
- Improvisational research in the rehearsal space

#### Primary Research:

- Interviews with people relevant to my dance training, to see how or if the way they described their personal movement identity aligned with how I defined my own

#### Secondary Research:

- Readings about existence, origin, identity, perception, and the body's own knowledge and history

Using all of this information, I developed a movement phrase that represented myself and the way that I move. The piece, developed from variations of this phrase, became the result of my experience with my research and allowed me to discover the way that one can not possibly separate who they are from what they create.

Dance research is best summarized through movement. Scan the QR code to access the video presentation of my work.



### Foundational Theories

#### Developed from Part I

1. Movement instincts and impulses exist for one's own protection; either in terms of physical safety or keeping the individual in a familiar or comfortable place.
2. My personal movement identity is inevitably influenced by each of my personal and somatic experiences, yet, it is made up of much more than those experiences.
3. It is not our experiences themselves, but the way that we perceive them, that influences our own personal movement identities.
4. It is absolutely impossible for a person to separate the essence of themselves from the work that they create.



"What was difficult was figuring out which parts of [my 'me' phrase] were truly 'mine' because there are so many factors that play into [who I am]"  
- Laura Berigan, Part II research participant and performer

### Group Application

Using methods similar to those in Part I, my group of dancers researched themselves through movement improvisation, writing, and discussion. Using what they discovered, they each choreographed two phrases: a "me" phrase that represented themselves and their movement, and a "not me" phrase that represented the opposite of themselves. The piece was built off of variations of what they created, as well as how I observed they existed in space together when improvising. This process also allowed for the discovery of my own choreographic affinities, and resulted in the development of three new theories.



### Additional Theories

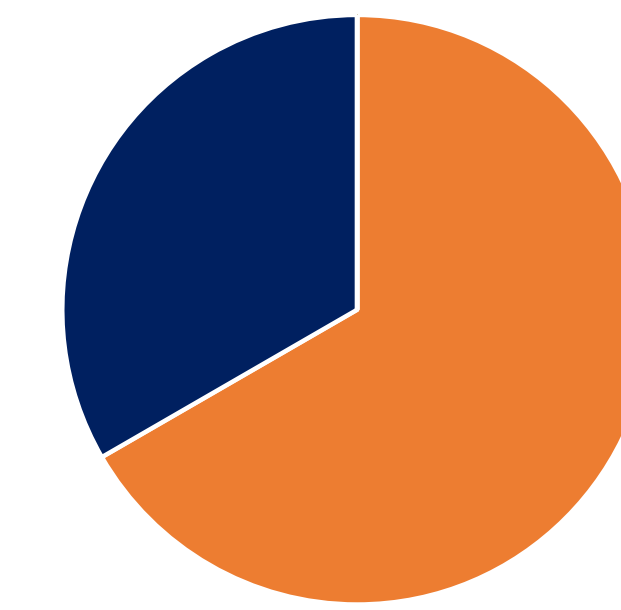
#### Developed from Part II

5. While what a person experiences physically and emotionally influences how they move, what they watch influences what they create.
6. One's own work, past or present, is always the heaviest influence of what they create, for that is likely the work they have viewed the most often and to the most critical extent.
7. Supported by the concept of kinesthetic empathy, the dance work that one has watched in the past influences what they see when they watch dance work in the present.

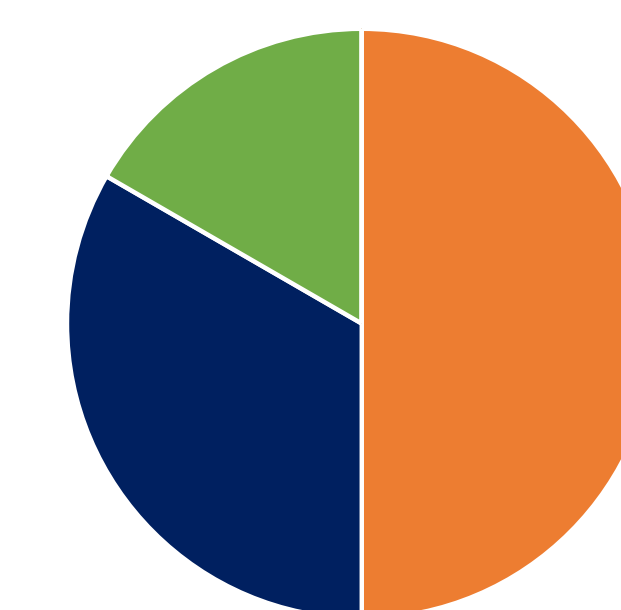
### Selected Survey Results

Collected from dancers two weeks after the performance

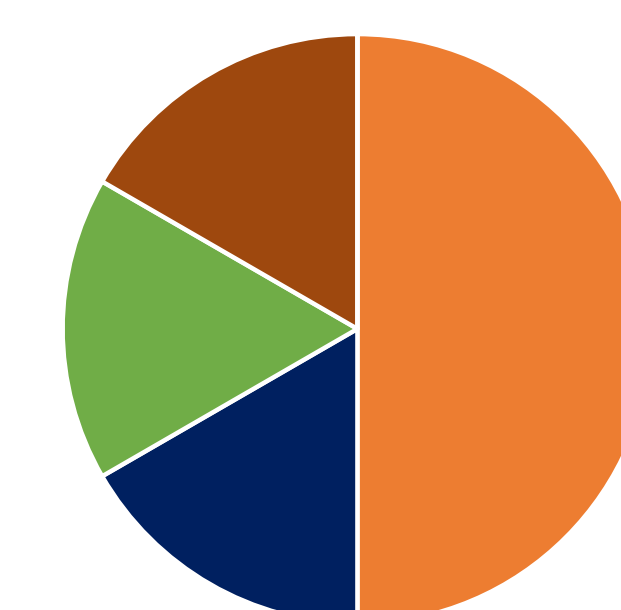
Who I am as a person influences the way I move.



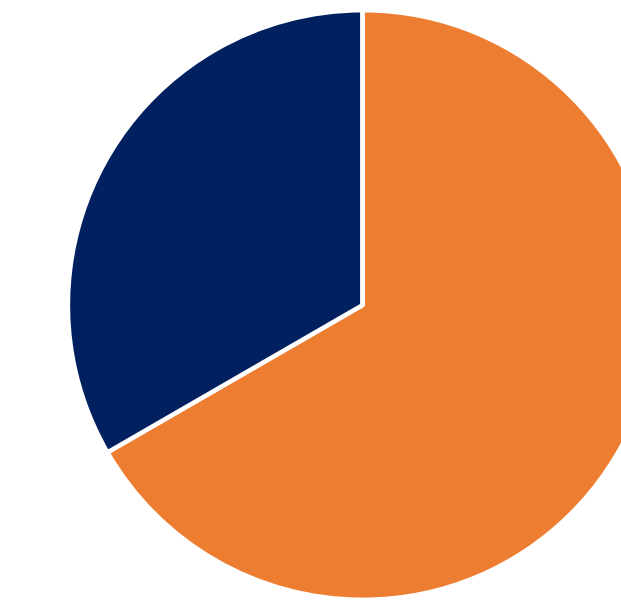
My somatic/physical experiences influence the way that I move.



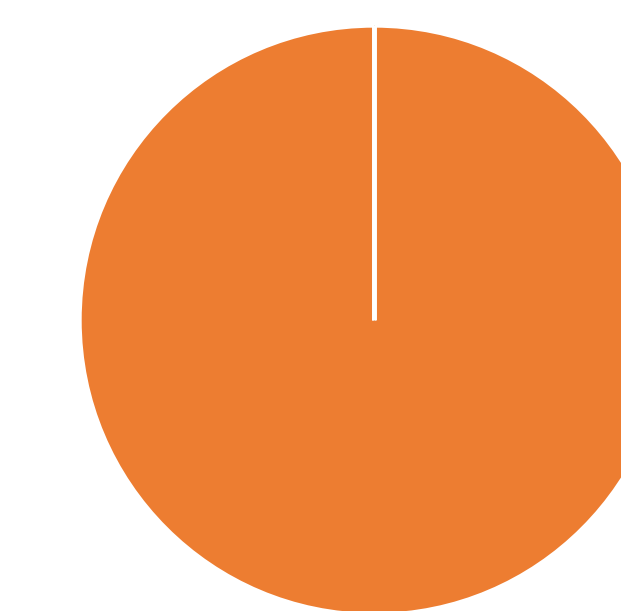
My psychological/emotional experiences influence the way that I move.



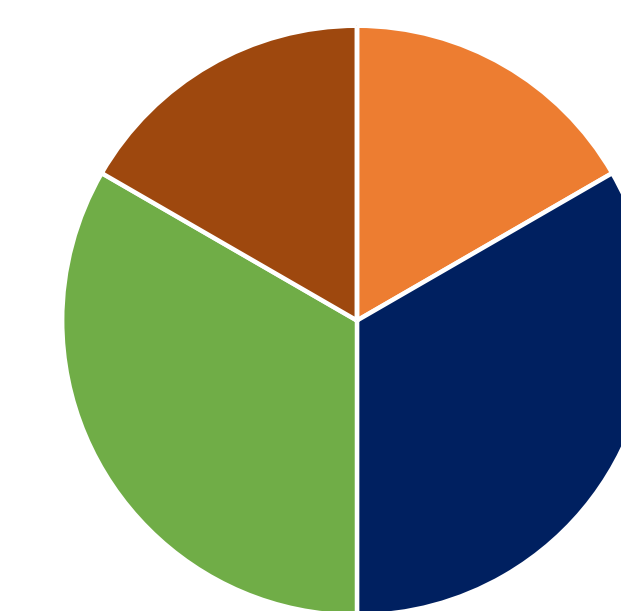
I felt connected to and/or influenced by the group throughout the creation process.



I felt connected to and/or influenced by the group while performing the work.



I felt connected to and/or influenced by the audience while performing the work.



#### Legend

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### Research Conclusions

Though this project would have to be done many more times with different dancers to most accurately affirm my theories, my dancers' responses support all of my theories on movement affinities. Dancers became aware of how their own histories and experiences influence the way that they move, in addition to the impossibility and impracticality of moving in complete neglect of one another.

"I felt very different from [the group] and even separate from them at times...I frequently went in the other direction as them naturally, and sometimes intentionally."  
- Jalyne Hopkins, Part II research participant and performer

"The more I [was] around people, the more I [wanted] to make connections...even when we were supposed to be more internal, I could sense them around me and it was a really neat thing."  
- Minnie Rogers, part II research participant and performer



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Lighting Designer: Karina Conte

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